

Peace Corps
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Blatchford, Joseph H.
Fulbright, J. William

Peace Corps Chief's Politicking

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Senator J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) scolded the youthful director of the Peace Corps yesterday for his speechmaking and said it smacked of an effort to use his job as "a stepping stone to politics."

The senator's chiding was met with an apology and an assurance from Peace Corps Director Joseph H. Blatchford that he has no plans to run for office this year or in 1972.

"Do you plan to make any more political speeches?" Fulbright questioned.

"No, I do not," Blatchford promised.

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said he still intended to hold up the \$98.8 million Peace Corps authorization bill until he gets some final details about distribution of a Lincoln Day speech that Blatchford made Feb. 17.

Speaking at a five-day-late Republican dinner in Albany, N.Y., Blatchford urged the GOP to pursue "partisan politics without charisma and without bologna," and hailed President Nixon as "a Republican President who has brought a burgeoning budget into check and checked a spiraling inflation."

Written with the help of two Peace Corps aides, it was distributed here and abroad at the agency's expense.

Fulbright said he was particularly unhappy because he had expressed fears last year at Blatchford's confirmation hearing that Blatchford might use the job as a political springboard.

"If this is what the Peace Corps is to be used for," Fulbright declared yesterday, "I'm in favor of transferring it to another agency."

A 35-year-old Californian, Blatchford was appointed by Mr. Nixon after an unsuccessful 1968 bid for Congress.

Repeatedly cautioned by Fulbright to "tell the truth," Blatchford said he undertook the speechmaking assignment

at the request of both the White House and Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York.

He called distribution of the talk at public expense unfortunate but unintentional—the result, he said, of a clerical error by an office girl who had not been told to send it out as a Peace Corps release.

"Neither Joe nor I had any inkling the staff was so efficient," Peace Corps information director Thomas Roeser said later. The information director said he intends to make up the costs of distributing the text.)

Blatchford declared at the hearing: "I'm not campaigning for anything," and added that he "just assumed it (the speech) would not go out" under Peace Corps auspices.

"Well, Mr. Blatchford, you're straining my credulity," Fulbright told him. The senator noted that his copy of the talk had initially been sent to someone in California where Blatchford had run for Congress against Glenn Democrat Glenn M. Anderson.

Sen. Clifford Case (R-N.J.) defended the talk as "a little more refreshing than the usual tripe you hear on a Lincoln Day platform."

Sen. Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.) recalled that former Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver was much more partisan on the Democrats' behalf in the 1964 campaign.

Blatchford also told the committee he had "absolutely no knowledge" of any CIA agents using the Peace Corps as a cover.

Scored